



July 11, 2007

Honorable Collin Peterson  
2211 Rayburn HOB  
Washington DC 20515-2307

Dear Representative Peterson:

On behalf of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and the organizations listed below, we are writing to express our strong support for the Food Stamp Program in the 2007 Farm Bill.

Food Stamps are the nation's most successful anti-hunger initiative. While the severe malnutrition documented in the U.S. in the 1960s is now rare, still about 35 million Americans – including *nearly one in five American children* – do not always have access to sufficient food. The U.S. Department of Agriculture calls this condition "food insecurity." We strongly believe that it is unacceptable for any Minnesotan to suffer from hunger, malnutrition, or food insecurity and that the federal government has an important role to play in addressing these issues.

***Food Stamps: The First Line of Defense Against Hunger and Malnutrition***

For three decades, Food Stamps have been the nation's first line of defense against hunger and malnutrition. More than 26 million Americans – and over 263,000 Minnesotans – use Food Stamps to feed their families. Seventy-seven percent of all Food Stamps in Minnesota are used by families with children; most of the rest are used by seniors or people with disabilities. In Minnesota, the average Food Stamp benefit equals only about \$1 per person per meal.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of Minnesotans struggling to feed their families. As costs for everything from housing to health care to energy increase, many family budgets have been strained to the breaking point. From 2000 to 2006, the number of Minnesotans receiving Food Stamps increased by 35 percent.

Yet the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that only 57 percent of eligible Minnesotans receive Food Stamps. In other words, an estimated 199,000 Minnesotans are eligible for Food Stamps but are not enrolled. Obstacles to participation include a lengthy and complex application form and the fact that many people don't know that help is available.

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*From 2211*

### ***Food Stamps Help Kids Lead Healthier Lives***

Food Stamps fight hunger and serve a vital public health function. Medical research has shown that lack of food can have devastating effects. Children who live in food insecure households are almost twice as likely to be in poor health than other children, since inadequate nutrition can harm a child's immune system and heighten the likelihood of contracting diseases. In older children, food insecurity can contribute to poor physical health, lower school achievement in reading and math, and behavioral and emotional problems.

### ***Food Stamps Strengthen Minnesota's Economy***

Food Stamps also make an important contribution to Minnesota's economy. In 2006, \$282 million in Food Stamps was spent in Minnesota, benefiting local farmers and grocers. But the USDA estimates that every dollar of Food Stamps generates almost two times that amount in total economic activity. This means that Food Stamps have a \$520 million impact on Minnesota's economy.

### ***Value of Food Stamps Eroding***

The single biggest problem facing Food Stamp participants is the significant erosion in the value of Food Stamps over time. In 1996, Congress froze the standard deduction used to calculate Food Stamp benefits. As a result, most Minnesota families have seen the value of their Food Stamps steadily decline during the past decade due to inflation, making it more difficult for them to purchase adequate food. In 2008, 214,000 Minnesotans impacted by the freeze will lose \$28 million in Food Stamps. Over the next ten years, they could lose \$376 million – unless Congress acts to stop the erosion in the value of Food Stamps.


**We urge Congress to take the following steps to strengthen Food Stamps and build on its success in preventing hunger and malnutrition in our communities:**

- **Stop the erosion in the value of Food Stamps.** Food Stamps should retain their purchasing power over time. Continuing to ignore the impact of inflation means that millions of Americans are less able to feed their families each year. Congress should reinstate its policy of indexing Food Stamps to inflation.
- **Reduce obstacles to participation.** Despite recent improvements, too many households are missing out on the vital assistance that Food Stamps provide in preventing hunger and promoting nutrition. Congress should invest in effective outreach efforts to increase Food Stamp participation rates. Other improvements could include increasing the current asset limit of \$2,000 for Food Stamp eligibility (which has not been changed for more than two decades), eliminating the current three-month time limit on eligibility for childless adults, and allowing the full deductibility of child care costs in Food Stamp benefit calculations, as proposed by President Bush.

Minnesotans look to our Congressional delegation to take a strong and united stand in support of Food Stamps, as well as other federal nutrition programs that work to eliminate hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity in our communities.

If you have any questions or need further information on the importance of Food Stamps, please contact Steve Francisco, Federal Policy Director, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits at [steve@mncn.org](mailto:steve@mncn.org) or call 651-642-1904 ext. 232.

Sincerely,



Steve Francisco  
Federal Policy Director  
Minnesota Council of Nonprofits

On behalf of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and the following organizations:

Anoka County Workforce Council, Blaine  
Center for Rural Affairs, Lyons  
Child Care & Nutrition, Inc, Ivanhoe  
Emergency Foodshelf Network, New Hope  
Glesener's, Inc., Bird Island  
Greater Twin Cities United Way, Minneapolis  
Hastings Family Service  
Heart of Lakes United Way, Alexandria  
Hunger Solutions Minnesota  
Intercongregation Communities Association,  
Minnetonka  
Jewish Community Action, St. Paul  
JOBS NOW Coalition, St. Paul  
Lakes & Prairies Community Action Partnership,  
Inc, Moorhead  
Land Stewardship Project  
Legal Services Advocacy Project  
Loaves & Fishes, Minneapolis  
Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy in  
Minnesota

Mahtomedi Area Food Shelf, Mahtomedi  
Minnesota Community Action Partnership  
Minnesota Farmers Union  
Minnesota Food Association  
Minnesota FoodShare, Minneapolis  
Minnesota National Organization for Women  
Minnesota Partners to End Hunger  
National Association of Social Workers MN  
Chapter  
Office for Social Justice, Archdiocese of St. Paul  
& Minneapolis  
Paynesville Community Service Center  
Project for Pride in Living, Minneapolis  
RISE Inc, Spring Lake Park  
Second Harvest Heartland, Maplewood  
Second Harvest North Central Food Bank, Grand  
Rapids  
Wayside House Inc, St. Louis Park  
YWCA of Minneapolis